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## The Search for CROSBY the MAN

by  
Robert Wester



**TOMBSTONE at the GRAVE of SYLVESTER S. CROSBY**  
**Lexington, Massachusetts**

"You can imagine my surprise when the ladies in Charlestown, New Hampshire told me that Sylvester Sage Crosby was interred there. Up until that point I knew that he was buried in Lexington, Massachusetts, I even had a photograph of his tombstone. You might say that I was confused for awhile, and then a bit shocked to realize that there had been TWO sons bearing the name Sylvester Sage Crosby."

Sequential page 982

## \*\*\* BETWEEN THE PAGES \*\*\*

**The Search for Crosby the Man (BP-3)  
as related to Ye Editor by Robert Wester; Suncook, New Hampshire****INTRODUCTION**

We are all familiar with "Crosby". Crosby the Book, that is. Also known as "The Early Coins of America; and the Laws Governing their Issue. Comprising also Descriptions of The Washington Pieces, The Anglo-American Tokens, Many Pieces of Unknown Origin, of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, and the First Patterns of the United States Mint" by Sylvester S. Crosby. This comprehensive numismatic text remains today, as it was when first published by the author in Boston in the year 1875, a cornerstone of Early American Numismatics.

We are not nearly so familiar, however, with Crosby the Man. One outstanding characteristic of S.S.Crosby that quickly evolves from the introduction to Crosby the Book is his persistence. "I intend no exaggeration in stating that I have long anticipated the day that should witness the completion of my labors, as the day that would bring me relief from the greatest care with which I have been burdened; a care I would never have accepted had I entertained the most remote idea that the whole labor and responsibility would devolve upon me, as has proved to be the case. And although my labors in this undertaking have brought me many pleasant correspondents, acquaintances and friends, yet the frequent, long, and often vexatious delays, and the absence of expected assistance, have rendered them, at times, extremely arduous." Crosby, indeed, was born of good stock.

Sylvester Sage Crosby was born in Charlestown, New Hampshire on September 2, 1831. His father Reverend Dr. Jaazaniah Crosby was an 1804 graduate of Harvard College and 54 year Pastor of the South Parish Unitarian Church in Charleston. His mother Holdah Robinson Sage was the daughter of Reverend Sylvester Sage who was born in Berlin Connecticut, Yale educated and Pastor of the Congregational Church in Westminster Vermont for 41 years.

My personal interest in Crosby the Man first started in July 1978 when I purchased a book from Roberta Carr's antiquarian bookshop in Concord, New Hampshire. I had received a telephone call one morning from Roberta Carr -- she said "Bob, I have a book The Early Coins of America by Sylvester S. Crosby, do you know any thing about it?" I told her "yes -- any American numismatist knows of Crosby" then she continued " I also have an auction catalog of some sort -- Hazeltine --70th Sale -- The Crosby Collection".

I went right down to the bookshop to examine the copy of Crosby. It was a handsome black leather bound, gold embossed 1875 copy of Sylvester S. Crosby's "The Early Coins of America, & etc." Stamped inside the front cover was the name J. Allen Crosby. Reproduced below is a copy of that stamped impression:

**J: ALLEN CROSBY**

Interesting that a book evidently owned by a Crosby was written by a Crosby! Bob, I thought, they are trying to tell you something! I wonder what the connection might be? I purchased the "Crosby" from Roberta Carr for \$75.00 and took it home with me. I later found the stamp J. Allen Crosby in two additional locations inside the volume.

I also purchased the Hazeltine 70th Sale Auction Catalog of the Crosby Collection. I determined later that it was handpriced by Sylvester Sage Crosby! As I thumbed through the pages in Roberta Carr's bookshop a quotation by Captain Hazeltine caught my eye:

**"Be careful of the unique pieces ye collector,  
for you will be held to strict accountability  
by the numismatists of the world should you  
carelessly suffer them to be lost."**

Little could I have guessed that some eight years later I would personally uncover two of S. S. Crosby's prized possessions that had been withheld from this sale of his numismatic collection.

### THE SEARCH BEGINS

In Crosby the Book on page 380 there appear the names of two other Crosbys in the list of subscribers -- Samuel Trevett Crosby of Boston and William Crosby of Boston, (I would learn later that these were brothers of S. S. Crosby) but the name J. Allen Crosby does not appear so evidently he was not one of the subscribers. I then set out to determine the identity of J. Allen Crosby. There was no way that I could have known where this curiosity would lead me!

I inquired of Roberta Carr as to the source of the copy of Crosby the Book and the sale catalog which I had purchased. She advised me that they had come to her from a Mrs. Edward W. McGlenen, a long time resident of Concord. (Sylvester S. Crosby, I would learn later, was Mrs. McGlenen's husband's great-uncle), I contacted Mrs. McGlenen who graciously answered my questions regarding the copy of Crosby; she was an absolute gold mine of information. She told me that J. Allen Crosby was James Allen Crosby, a nephew of Sylvester Sage Crosby, and

that it was he who had written the Crosby obituary which appeared on page 442 in the September 1914 issue of The Numismatist. That obituary notice is reproduced below:

### Obituary.

#### SYLVESTER S. CROSBY

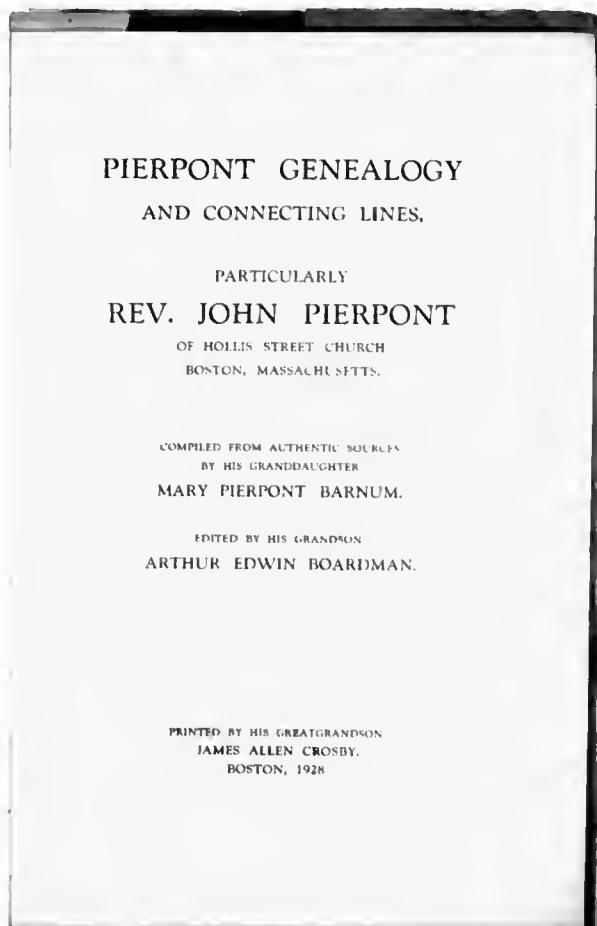
Sylvester S. Crosby, one of the best known American authorities on numismatics, died Tuesday evening, Aug. 18, at his home, 21 Sacramento street, Cambridge, Mass., of a stomach trouble. Mr. Crosby was born in Charlestown, N. H., September 2, 1831, and had lived in Cambridge forty-two years, all of that time in the same house. Mr. Crosby was a watchmaker by trade and at the time of his retirement from business activities fifteen years ago was located at 43 West street, Boston.

Mr. Crosby was a man of versatile interests, and outside of the watchmaking business he had specialized in several other directions, notably numismatics, archaeology, astronomy, and the culture of mushrooms. In the first named subject he was considered an exceptional authority. He was the author of two illustrated works on the subject of American coins, namely: "The Early Coins of America," and "The United States Coinage of 1793—Cent and Half Cents."

Mr. Crosby was an honorary member of the American Numismatic Association, The American Numismatic Society, and the Boston Numismatic Society. He was a member of the First Parish church and of the New England Archaeological society. He was the last of eleven children of Rev. Avazaniah Crosby, for over fifty years pastor of the Charlestown Congregational church. He was married twice, but had no children. His only surviving relatives are a nephew, Allen Crosby of Jamaica Plain, and a niece, Miss Crosby. The funeral was held from the house yesterday afternoon at one o'clock. Rev. James De Normandie of Roxbury officiated. The burial was in Lexington.

Mrs. McGlenen also told me that James Allen Crosby had been a printer in Boston and that she had one of his books, which she later gave to me. It was a copy of PIERPONT GENEALOGY. The frontispiece is reproduced on the next page. Note in particular the statement at the bottom of the page "Printed by his greatgrandson James Allen Crosby." As I thumbed through the pages I suddenly realized that James Allen Crosby, Sylvester Sage Crosby's nephew, was also the great grandson of the Reverend John Pierpont, one of the founders of Yale College! As I continued scanning through the book I discovered several other familiar names! Names that would become even more familiar as I traced back through the lineage of the Crosby and Pierpont families. James Allen Crosby, Jaazaniah Crosby, Huldah Robinson Sage, Henry Allen McGlenen. McGlenen!

McGlenen! I was talking with Irene McGlenen! The same family? Yes. The relationships quickly coalesced into meaningful context. Sylvester Sage Crosby had a brother named James, and it was James' children, son James Allen Crosby and daughter Mary Crosby McGlenen who had together settled the estate of Sylvester Sage Crosby. At his death on August 18, 1914 Crosby the Man's personal copy of Crosby the Book became the property of James Allen Crosby who stamped it with his own namestamp "J. ALLEN CROSBY". At James' death the book and other effects of Sylvester Sage Crosby moved into the McGlenen family where



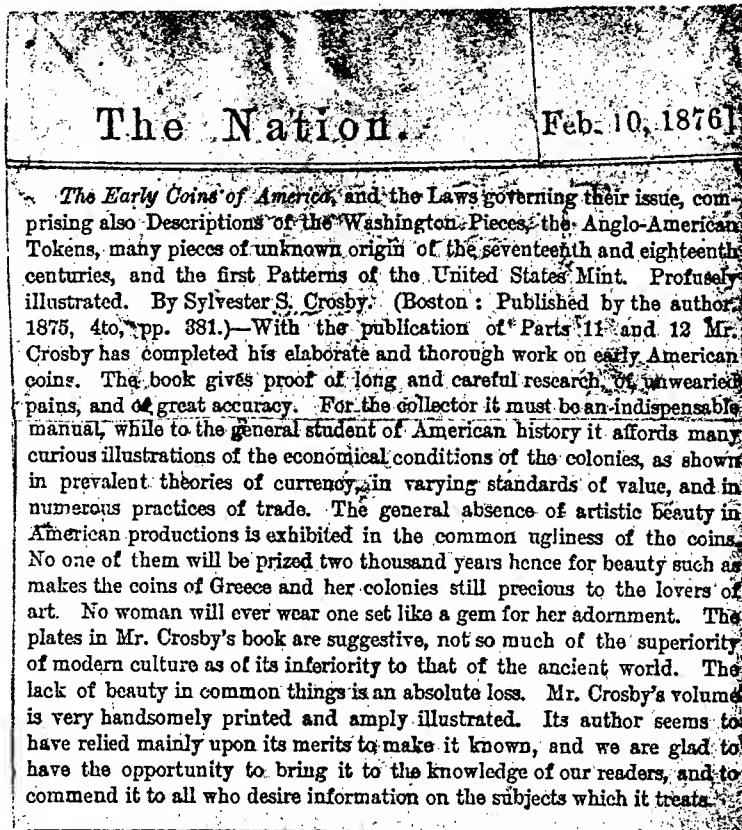
**FRONTISPIECE from "Pierpont Genealogy"**  
**Printed by James Allen Crosby**

many of them had remained intact until the present time. Unfortunately, a considerable number of items from S. S. Crosby's estate including some large items, personal papers and correspondence had been disposed of in 1955 when Mrs. McGlenen moved to Concord from Ware, Massachusetts.

My curiosity about the rubber stamped name J.ALLEN CROSBY between the pages of a copy of Crosby the Book had led to the discovery of the residue of the estate of Crosby the Man and the realization that I was the owner of Sylvester Sage Crosby's personal copy of "Early Coins of America"! Wow! For years I have been interested in old books, especially books relating to numismatics, and have collected them with great enthusiasm. Suddenly I had exceeded all of my expectations and the excitement was intense -- but just as suddenly my excitement turned into an insatiable interest and a totally overwhelming desire to learn more of Crosby the Man. It was not long before my wife discovered that she was living with two men, Bob Wester and Sylvester Crosby, and over the next several years she would often ask me "Bob, when are you going to be finished with Crosby?" Sylvester Sage Crosby had become an obsession with me!

My discussions continued from time to time with Mrs. McGlenen as she located various items from the S. S. Crosby estate. As I have mentioned, many items were discarded when Mrs. McGlenen moved to Concord New Hampshire, but a few had been saved. At one time all of the Crosby effects had been stored in the McGlenen attic in Weare but cracks had started developing in the plaster and it was necessary to move the materials from the attic to avoid damage to the structure.

During my first visit with Mrs. McGlenen, after she had learned of my interest in Crosby and in books in general, she produced from her basement another copy of Crosby the Book, which I later purchased from her. At first I believed it to be a set of subscribers copies, the individual sections delivered to subscribers as they were issued. The pages, however, in these copies were uncut and each one was inserted in a cover, or wrapper, for the first issue -- Part 1 -- on which the correct part number had been entered by hand in Crosby's handwriting. These copies were, evidently, folio copies very likely used by him for checking prior to formal issue. Inside of Part 1 was inserted a clipping -- "The Nation" -- describing "The Early Coins of America".



Clipping from "The Nation" discovered inside  
Part 1 of Crosby's folio copies of his "Early Colns of America"

Mrs. McGlenen promised that there was more Crosby material available, but to locate it would require waiting for spring cleaning time, and that "we would do some spring cleaning together!" Spring seemed to require forever to arrive that year! But, as with every year, spring finally did arrive and it was an exciting and memorable day at Mrs. McGlenen's.

### THE REMAINDER OF THE ESTATE OF S.S. CROSBY

Right before my eyes were the remaining effects of Sylvester Sage Crosby. One of the first things I picked out of a box was a framed photograph of the home of the Reverend Jaazaniah Crosby of Charlestown. On the back of the frame was the handwritten notation "house where my father James Crosby was born". James Crosby was a brother of Sylvester S. Crosby. And another photograph -- a family group photograph of Crosby family members gathered in front of a residence, the same house as in the first photograph! I had found "The Crosby's of Charlestown!"



**Crosby Family Photograph of 1860**

I call this family photograph the "Ordination Photograph" because it was taken in 1860 during the 50th anniversary celebration of the ordination of Dr. Crosby at a festival which was held at his home at which his family and friends, from near and far, participated. This photograph was made during those activities.

In this photograph Sylvester S. Crosby, at age 29, is standing in the back row just to the right of his father Reverend Jaazaniah Crosby who is seated in the front row flanked by grandchildren. All five Crosby sons are pictured in this photograph, all standing in the back row. The gentleman in the back row at the far right has not been identified. The ladies who have been identified are, front row from left, Ann Parker Paifrey a daughter from Rev. Crosby's first wife, Reverend Crosby's third wife Elizabeth Allen. The grandchildren with Rev. Crosby are the Bridges, daughters of Reverend William Bridge and Elizabeth Crosby Bridge seated in the front row at the far right. Others in this photograph have not yet been identified.

All of the remaining items from the estate of S.S. Crosby were small objects of obvious real or sentimental value. A pocket watch with tag attached "S.S. Crosby, Sacramento St. Cambridge"; another pocket watch given to him by his father, the Rev. Crosby, which Sylvester had later presented to his nephew James Allen Crosby; a family autograph book which had belonged to Mary Crosby McGlenen containing the autographs of S.S. Crosby and his second wife "Hittie" (Mehitabel) on opposite pages; a set of twelve sterling silver coffee spoons which had been carefully labeled by Mary Crosby McGlenen as having belonged to the S.S. Crosbys; various photographs and silhouettes; his father's walking stick; and even a lock of hair taken by Surgeon Gilchrist (Crosby's Brother-in-Law) from the body of abolitionist John Brown at Harper's Ferry. All of these items had very fortunately been carefully labeled by James Allen Crosby and his sister Mary Crosby McGlenen at the time they settled S.S. Crosby's estate.

Mrs. McGlenen recalled several other larger items that had been the property of S.S. Crosby but had been disposed of much earlier. One in particular is intriguing to me and may someday be found -- a mantel clock, 18 inches high, personally constructed by S.S. Crosby, and signed by him, that hopefully still exists today somewhere in New Hampshire or the New England area. Another was Crosby's astronomical telescope -- so large that two men were required to remove it from the attic when it was donated to a nearby college.

By this time, as I have already mentioned, I was literally obsessed by a desire to learn all that I could about Sylvester Sage Crosby, the landmark writer of Early American Numismatics. The events and findings outlined above were only the beginning and at the time I had not yet put together in proper context many of the facts and relationships that are expressed. These relationships would come later as new material was discovered and all the facts were correctly identified and interrelated.

After my first visit with Mrs. McGlenen I visited the New Hampshire State Library which netted for me a major find -- a booklet "Sketch of The Life of Dr. Crosby, of Charleston, N.H." by Rev. Livingston Stone and published in Boston, 1866 by the Press of John Wilson and Sons. It was in this booklet that I found Sylvester Sage Crosby's maternal name. Great day! I must have read that booklet a half dozen times during the next few weeks and literally found myself in the 1830's. All of this new information was discovered during January or February of 1979 and I must confess that I felt that I could not afford to miss any minute detail from here on of the events that I believed to be of great numismatic significance.

## A TRIP TO LEXINGTON MASSACHUSETTS

The Sylvester Sage Crosby obituary which appeared in the September 1914 issue of "The Numismatist" offered several additional clues. One important clue was the fact that Crosby was buried in Lexington, Massachusetts, and I was on my way to Lexington! I discovered that you don't just walk into the cemetery and find a gravesite. There are seven cemeteries in Lexington -- I was directed to the Highway Department for Information -- and there, as I recall, on one wall was a locator card file for all of the residents of the seven cemeteries. We found S.S. Crosby listed in the Monroe Cemetery; his second wife Mehitabel, is interred with him. A major clue appeared on the card "stomach cancer" for which standard obituary language in those days was stomach trouble. I have been unable, to this day, to find much detailed information about Crosby's second wife, but the search continues. His first wife Mary Elizabeth Capelle, I learned (May 1986), was one of eight children. She was born in Lexington, Massachusetts on November 23, 1834; her brother William Curtis Capelle, who was also a subscriber to Crosby's "Early Coins", was a Brigadier General in the Army.

Name	INTERMENT	Page 401		
Crosby, Sylvester Sage (ashes)	Sec.	Lot No. 57		
Avenue		Single grave		
Path		Receipt No.		
Age	Yrs.	Mo.	Days	Grave No.
82	11	16		3-13
Date of Burial	Interment No.			
August 24, 1914	Year No. 27			
Place of death	Cause of death			
Undertaker	Cambridge, Mass. Cancer of Stomach			

I visited the Crosby gravesite in the Monroe Cemetery in Lexington, said a private prayer for Crosby, and made photographs of the gravestone for my research files. Just to the right was a smaller marker identifying the grave of his first wife, Mary Elizabeth Capell. I felt as though I had arrived at the conclusion of my research but I well knew that it had only really begun. Little could I even begin to imagine that later in my search I would locate the gravesite of another brother with the name Sylvester Sage Crosby!

### A TRIP TO CHARLESTOWN, NEW HAMPSHIRE

It was now early 1986, almost eight years since my discovery of Crosby's personal copies of Early Coins of America, and the next trip in my search for Crosby the Man was to Charlestown, New Hampshire, the birthplace of Sylvester Sage Crosby. I was confident that I would be able to locate a substantial amount of information in Charlestown since Crosby was born there and his father had been a pastor there for 54 years, and was Harvard educated. I had with me the only known photograph of the house in which he was born and I wanted to learn the exact location at which it had stood prior to burning to the ground in 1864.

I telephoned the Town Clerk in Charlestown, Charlene Comstock, and she was pleased to learn of my investigation of "The Crosbys". She told me that Reverend Jaazaniah Crosby had been one of Charlestown's most prominent and beloved citizens and that this image had remained with the townspeople over the years. A friend of Charlene's knew of the approximate location of the old Crosby homestead -- it is now a portion of an estate in Charlestown. After spending several hours examining the former homesite I returned to Charlene's office where she introduced me to Florence Bingham, the town librarian. Florence was both thoughtful and helpful -- she provided me with the handwritten records of Reverend Crosby and told me that Sylvester Sage Crosby was buried in Charlestown and that according to the records he was listed as being in the family plot!

You can imagine my surprise when these ladies in Charlestown, New Hampshire told me that Sylvester Sage Crosby was interred there. Up until that point I KNEW that he was buried in Lexington, Massachusetts, I even had a photograph of his tombstone. You might say that I was confused for awhile, and then a bit shocked to realize that there had been TWO sons bearing the name Sylvester Sage Crosby. I learned later that it was not unusual, in those days, for a family to reuse the name of a son or daughter who had died in infancy.

After lunch we went out to the cemetery to the Crosby family plot. We located the markers for Reverend Dr. Crosby and Mrs. Crosby and their infant daughter Sibil (May 3, 1817 - October 17, 1817), as well as that of Naval Surgeon Edward Gilchrist and his wife Clarissa Crosby. And sure enough, there were two other small markers, one for Sylvester Sage Crosby (March 18, 1825 - April 7, 1826) and the last and youngest of all the Crosbys, John Parker Crosby (1832-1834). These two small

markers filled many voids! S.S.Crosby is and has generally been accepted as being the youngest, but technically he was not the youngest because of John Parker Crosby who for some reason was not recorded in Rev. Saunderson's 1876 Charlestown History.



**PHOTOGRAPH OF THE FIRST SSC's GRAVE MARKER**

Later that day, before leaving Charlestown, Florence Bingham the librarian showed me the Saunderson Town History (First Edition) which stated that there were indeed two S. S. Crosbys and contained a portrait of Reverend Jaazaniah Crosby. I had been familiar with the second edition which had been considerably abbreviated but still retained the portrait of Rev. Crosby. I had never thought to look for a first edition of the History of Charlestown in order to obtain different information. I live about an hours drive from Charlestown and all during the drive home I thought about what an exciting project my research into the life of S. S. Crosby had become. He was a fascinating man, but his father was even moreso; I think I fell in love with the character of the father, Dr. Jaazaniah Crosby!

#### **The FINAL DISCOVERY from the ESTATE of SYLVESTER SAGE CROSBY**

During the eight years since my discovery of Crosby's personal copy of The Early Coins of America in Roberta Carr's bookshop in Concord, New Hampshire I had worked continually to learn more of Crosby the Man and, while doing so, had prepared several displays and exhibits of materials relating to Crosby which have been displayed at various

conventions, coin shows, and the like. In addition I had supplied Mr. Eric P. Newman with my early findings, including the Crosby Family Photograph, which he incorporated into his Biographical Forward for the second Quarterman reprint (1983) of Crosby the Book. I suppose that as a direct result of all of these activities I had acquired a reputation of sorts as an expert on S. S. Crosby, at least in the New Hampshire area.

By June of 1986 Mrs. McGlenen had completed her "spring housecleaning" chores and was moving into a retirement home. My general feeling was that I had exhausted the final opportunity to uncover anymore of Crosby's personal effects. Any remaining items that had been disposed of prior to my initial discovery of Crosby's copy of his masterpiece could probably not be attributed to Crosby. This, however, turned out not to be the case. One of the most exciting discoveries was yet to come!

On June 3rd, 1986 during an auction sale session my reputation as a "Crosby expert" paid off in a totally unexpected manner. A gentleman introduced himself and stated that he too had managed to acquire some Crosby artifacts. He stated that sometime back he had purchased a "shoebox full" of odds and ends and that it included several medals bearing the name Crosby. I was extremely anxious to see them and told him that this might well be the most important thing that would happen to me this year. I also knew that I might be disappointed and fully expected to find that they were medals that had been presented to S. S. Crosby's grandfather Reverend Sylvester Sage, or perhaps even his father the Reverend Dr. Jaazaniah Crosby.

We had to drive some 30 miles to reach his home in order to view the medals. By the time we reached the house I felt as though I was walking a tightrope. The excitement was almost unbearable. When the three specimens were handed to me I couldn't believe my eyes! Each one was in a magnificent state of preservation.

The first one was a coin -- an 1860 New Orleans mint mark silver dollar, in almost mint condition, and hand engraved on the reverse directly above the Eagle:

James Allen Crosby July 28, 1864



Obviously a "birthmedal" as the date is that given in the Pierpont Genealogy as the birthdate of James Allen Crosby.

But the other two items were not coins, but medals, in superb condition. One was copper, the other silver. The copper was toned a rich mahogany color, and on the silver medal the toning exhibited every color of the rainbow. Both were member's medals of the American Numismatic and Archaeological Society. In my hand I was holding S. S. Crosby's personal presentation medals from the society!

The copper medal was hand engraved:

Sylvester Sage Crosby  
Corresponding Member  
Apr. 22nd 1869



And the silver medal:

Sylvester Sage Crosby  
Honorary Member  
Mch. 21st 1876



As I looked with wonder at these three amazing numismatic mementos I recalled Captain John Hazeltine's quote from his sale catalog of the Crosby collection:

"Be careful of the unique pieces ye collector,  
for you will be held to strict accountability  
by the numismatists of the world should you  
carelessly suffer them to be lost."

I purchased the three items from the gentleman at an overly generous price and we parted company that day in good spirits! He told me afterward that he had paid a handsome price for the entire box of treasures and did not know what price to assign to the medals until the other items were disposed of; it had taken him about four months to sell the other items in the lot.

I shall be eternally grateful that these medals were not permanently lost, and I can most assuredly state how grateful I am knowing that they survived and are once again available for the world to see. On the other hand I shall always wonder how much of Crosby's personal numismatic materials, notebooks & correspondence and the like, have been lost. And then again, perhaps the search is not yet over --

#### **Editor's comment ---**

Hopefully this discussion of the discoveries and circumstances that led Bob Wester into the details of the history of Sylvester Sage Crosby's family will also lead others to recognize and produce some of the other Crosby artifacts and related items that may still exist in the Massachusetts/New Hampshire area today. A considerable quantity of additional photographs of Crosby's relatives and related items, autographs and the like, have been uncovered by Bob Wester and it may be possible to present some of these in a future issue; a considerable amount of photographic work will be necessary to make many of them suitable for publication.

In a recent followup telephone discussion with Bob, ye Editor inquired as to the original source of the Crosby medallions. The answer, it turns out, is that they too came from Mrs. McGlenen via Roberta Carr's bookshop in Concord. In the final cleanup and cleanout of Mrs. McGlenen's home there had accumulated in the process a considerable quantity of small antique trinkets and miscellaneous items believed to have no connection with the Crosby artifacts. These were turned over to Roberta Carr who in turn sold the entire lot, a "large shoebox full", to a noted Bedford, New Hampshire antique dealer and historian, Mr. Hank Ford, who brought the medals to Bob's attention.

Our special thanks to Michael J. Hodder for his cooperation with Bob Wester and in making available the facilities of Bowers and Merena Galleries, Inc. to produce the photographs of the Crosby medallions.

JCS



**ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

Both ye Editor and Bob Wester are indebted to Alice Irene Whitney McGlenen (Mrs. Edward Webster McGlenen) of Concord, New Hampshire for her gracious cooperation in making available to Bob Wester the remaining effects from the estate of Sylvester Sage Crosby. That these items have remained relatively intact during the 72 years since his death is remarkable and indicative of the treasures remaining to be discovered in the attics of America, if only someone can recognize their significance.

We asked Mrs. McGlenen to provide a summary of her recollections of family history from the days of Sylvester S. Crosby, and she kindly provided the following observations:

"The Reverend Jaazaniah Crosby performed a marriage service in Charleston, New Hampshire, for his son James and Mary Lord Pierpont who was the grand daughter of the Reverend John Pierpont. Their children were James Allen Crosby and Mary Louise Pierpont Crosby.

Mary L. Pierpont Crosby married Edward Webster McGlenen in Boston. Their son, Edward Webster McGlenen, Jr., married me, Alice Irene Whitney. We had met in the Unitarian Church in Dorchester and were married there. My husband became a Unitarian minister and served churches in Brewster, Westborough, Warwick and Ware, all in Massachusetts.

Mary Pierpont McGlenen (and James Allen Crosby, Jr., inherited many of the possessions of her Uncle, Sylvester Sage Crosby, and passed them on to my husband and me.

Among the books was a first edition of Sylvester Crosby's "Early Coins of America." The books and family memorabilia were moved a number of times as I changed my residence. When I sold many of my books some years after my husband died, to Mrs. Roberta Carr, I did not recognize the (historical) value of Sylvester Crosby's book. Mrs. Carr was acquainted with Mr. Robert Wester and his interest in coins, and sold him the book. He wanted to know where Mrs. Carr had found the book and he and I became acquainted.

Thus was started an interesting and valuable friendship for both. We have conferred many times (so as) to keep me informed of the progress of his research which has been quite exhaustive. Later I found I had an original folio copy of "Early Coins" which is now in the possession of Robert Wester along with many items of the Crosby family.

Being involved indirectly in preserving information about Sylvester Crosby and the Crosby family has been a great joy to me and I am very happy to see it published in The Colonial Newsletter by Mr. Spilman."

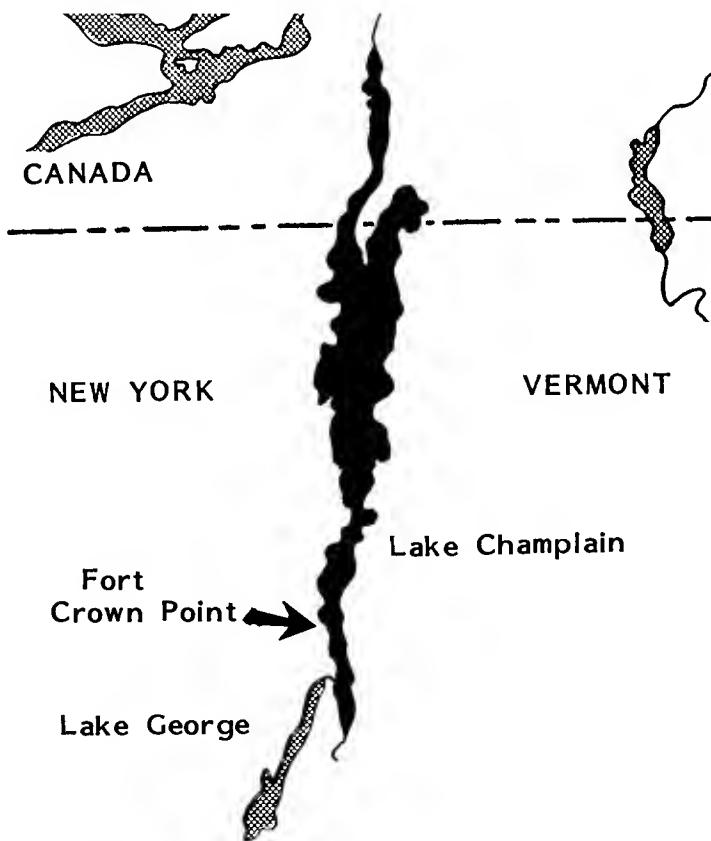
signed: Alice Irene McGlenen  
August 18, 1986



**GILFOIL'S COPPERS****from Gary A. Trudgen; Endwell, New York****(TN-111)**

Historians have recorded a private coining episode that occurred in Colonial America that has apparently been overlooked by numismatists. This incident took place at Fort Crown Point in the Colony of New York during the peaceful interlude (1764-1774) between the French & Indian War and the American Revolution.

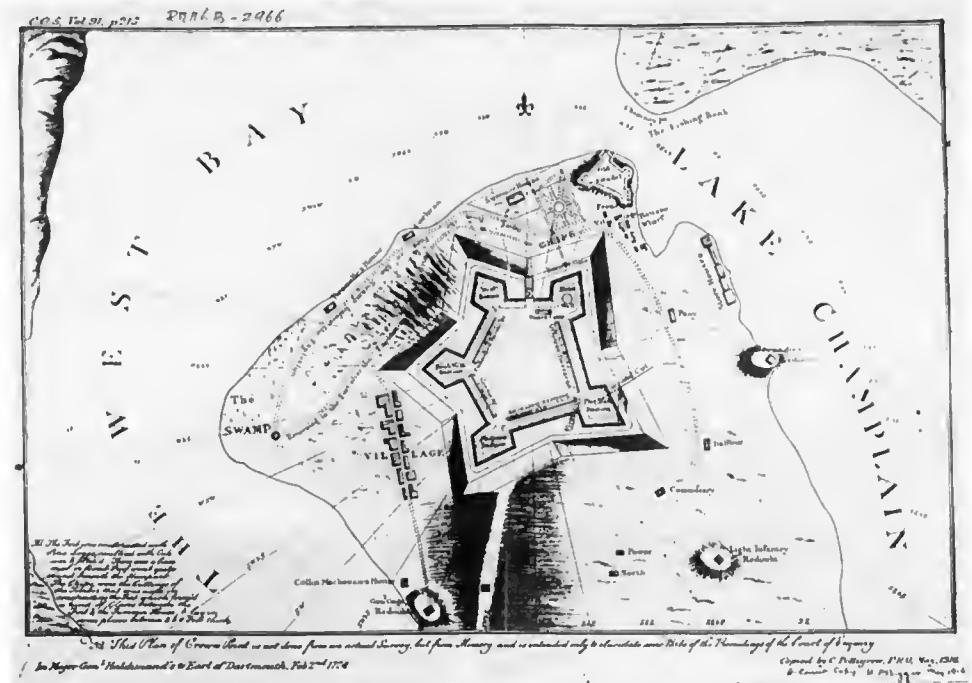
Fort Crown Point was strategically located on a large peninsula on the west side of Lake Champlain such that it commanded the narrow passage to the southern portion of the lake. British general Jeffery Amherst ordered the construction of the fort in 1759 after the French blew up Fort St. Frederic and retreated from the valley. The fort was never completed although work continued on it until the end of the French & Indian War in 1763. Even though unfinished, Fort Crown Point was the largest colonial fortress to be built on this continent. It enclosed a six-and-a-half acre parade ground.



**Sketch Indicating Location of Fort Crown Point  
on West Shore of Lake Champlain**

This huge British fortress brought a sense of security to the area. Numbers of English officers at Crown Point retired and settled in the surrounding countryside. Soon a village was established outside the west walls of the fort. The village consisted of approximately two

dozen clustered houses plus a scattering of other dwellings around the area. At the height of the British occupation there were a total of 83 houses at Crown Point. In 1769, New York colonial administrators took steps to establish a local town government for this community about the fort.



**Detail Map of Fort Crown Point**  
**Source: Public Record Office - London, England**

On April 21, 1773 Fort Crown Point, neglected and in disrepair, suffered a major catastrophe. Mrs. Ross, while cooking some pork and beans, set fire to a sooted chimney in the fort. The fire spread to the barracks roof, and then to the tarred pine log walls of the fort. The earth fill spilled out as the walls burned. The people fled in terror as the fire approached the magazine which contained 100 barrels of gunpowder. A violent explosion and fire totally destroyed the great fort, leaving Crown Point defenseless.

A military court of inquiry was held in 1774 regarding the fire and resultant destruction of Fort Crown Point. Minutes of the proceedings of this court are preserved in the Public Record Office in London. Contained in these minutes, William Gilfoil, blacksmith and private in the 26th Regiment of the British Army, is accused of making coppers that were accepted in the local British Crown Point community as legal tender. Excerpts from these minutes concerning Gilfoil's coining activity follow. The questions were asked by Lieutenant Jocelyn Feltham of the 26th Regiment. The first person to be cross-examined

concerning Gilfoil's coining activities was Captain William Friend, Commander of his Majesty's Sloop on Lake Champlain.

QUESTION "Have you not heard or have not you seen, Coppers made to pass current for Half pence at Crown Point which were said to be made by Gilfoil the Smith?"

ANSWER "I never saw any of the Coppers, nor ever saw him make any, but it was the common Report that Gilfoil had made some out of Copper Hoops."

The next questions were put to Findley Miller, Surgeon's Mate of the 26th Regiment.

QUESTION "Did you ever know any Copper Half pence to have been made by Gilfoil the Smith out of Copper Hoops and pass current at Crown Point, in any Quantity?"

ANSWER "There were many Coppers current at Crown Point, beat out to the size of a Half penny which were said to be made by Gilfoil, and I once got Fourteen of them in Exchange for a Shilling."

QUESTION "Do you know of any person having received a larger Quantity from Gilfoil himself?"

ANSWER "There was a French-woman who went by the name of Mrs. Dalton who said she had received several Dollars worth of them, but not from Gilfoil in particular; They usually went by the name of Gilfoil's Coppers.

QUESTION "Did you ever hear that Gilfoil was assisted by any Person in making those Coppers?"

ANSWER "I have been told, but I don't recollect by whom, that he was instructed in making them by a Deserter from the 52nd Regiment."

The final question concerning Gilfoil's coppers was asked of Joseph Russel, Armorer at Crown Point.

QUESTION "Did you ever see or hear of Gilfoil the Smith working up any of His Majesty's Stores of Iron or Copper, into any Shape or Fashion, so as to be of service to himself?"

ANSWER "I never saw him make anything, but I have heard that he has made several Coppers, or Half pence."

From the preceding testimony we establish that Gilfoil's coppers were the size of halfpence and were accepted as such. They passed at the rate of 14 per shilling, which is the same rate as other coppers of that day. Also, it is stated that Gilfoil's coppers were "beat out", which seems to imply that they were simple copper disks without stamped impressions. To date, archaeological exploration at Crown

Point has not uncovered anything that might be considered to be one of Gilfoil's Coppers. So ends the alleged story of William Gilfoil and his copper coinage.

In conclusion, I would like to thank Mr. Gregory T. Furness, Historic Site Manager at Crown Point, for supplying me with most of the material on which this article is based. The hand drawn detail map of the Fort is in the Public Record Office in London and a copy was provided by the Library of the Crown Point Historic Site, Crown Point, New York. A note along the lower margin of the map states "This Plan of Crown Point is not done from an actual survey, but from Memory; and is intended only to elucidate some Parts of the Proceedings of the Court of Inquiry."

## EDITOR'S COMMENTS

After considerable contemplation of the cryptic comments contained in the testimony before the Board of Inquiry, ye Editor would like to add some of his perceptions that have evolved from this rather brief transcript.

The word coppers is used almost exclusively throughout the testimony. This implies to ye Editor that these items were recognized as coins, specifically regal halfpence, and not simply blank disks of copper metal. Further, the Armorer is questioned about the use of iron from His Majesty's Stores, as well as copper, which could imply Gilfoil's fashioning tools, dies, or other coinage devices from the available supplies at the Fort. And, finally, the observation that the Smith was "Instructed in making them" by a deserter from another regiment I believe is important because a blacksmith of that era was generally an exceptional worker of rough iron objects and implements but would not usually possess the skills necessary to engrave or sink die blanks. All of this information, even though sketchy, when taken together seems to imply that Gilfoil's Coppers were actually coins in similitude of regal halfpence produced as a hammered coinage ("beat out") rather than being struck in a mechanical press. If these "coppers" were only blank disks it would hardly require the instruction of someone else for their manufacture.

Perhaps other information is available from one of our Patrons that might throw additional light on Gary Trudgen's newly discovered Early American Mintsite at Fort Crown Point, New York.

